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Christ Set At Nought

"And how is it written of the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nought?"

—Mark 9:12

EVERYMAN toils to amount to something, and then toils more to add something to the amount. In the interest of the increase, Everyman strains his body and stretches his mind, and even bends his ethics and compromises his convictions.

Everyman has a reputation to build. And the building must be constantly enlarged as a protection against the rival successes of his like-minded fellows. At birth he was given a name. But a name is a task, it must be carved large in the reluctant respect of his friends, and especially of his enemies.

To become Somebody, Everyman must toil relentlessly. But each little victory and each achievement adds something to the total, to the final sum, and the sum must be large. For Everyman must construct an equation, an equation in which Everyman equals greatness.

And it is thus that Everyman becomes a Nobody with a success that does not distinguish and a name that does not identify. For in the divine economy work-righteousness does not avail. It is the meaning of grace that the works and the worker of the law must be set at nought. If Everyman is to glory he will have to glory in the Lord; if he is to have a name that identifies he must receive it as a gift of grace.

THE Son of Man too must be set at nought. He too must construct an equation. He must suffer, empty himself, earn the contempt of his fellows. He must forsake his glory. For him the ladder of success leads downward. One rung lower, and still another. The Lord must come in servant-form. He must command no respect, and lose such respect as he has. He must toil to become nameless, that God may give him a name, a name higher than his fellows. He must not prize highly his crown with its halo of glory. He must climb downward to the thorns and the darkness. By his own efforts he must construct an equation. He must make himself an equation with zero; he must make himself equal to nothing.

And this must not happen to him. He himself must cause it to happen. He may not be a victim; even in this he must be the Lord. And the task of the

Lord is to make himself a servant. He must not be ministered unto. He must minister to others by first ministering unto himself. The Lord must be his own servant, for it is the Lord of glory that must be crucified. He must empty himself, he must take himself down; he must alienate his Church, offend his disciples so that they keep their distance. He must disown his own mother. He himself must choose his Cross, determine the fact and set the time of his own death. He must cause himself to be disrobed and thus be both the fulfiller and fulfillment of prophecy. He must pour out his own life in death. None may take it from him; none may render him even this service. He himself must fulfill God's Word that he the Christ be set at nought. He must build his own equation, set himself at nought, himself make himself equal to nothing.

And in it all, he must know that this is God's will for him, God's Word upon him. It is God who condemns him through Pilate. The game of prophecy played upon his back is scheduled by God. The nails, the thorns, the game

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of dice, the disrobing is the fulfillment of God's own Word. And in it all he must thank and praise his God, and love his Father, the Father who forsakes his only Son. For when he is set at nought and reduced to nothing, he must praise the greatness of God and declare that God alone is great, the God whose Word sets him at nought. Reduced to nothing, he must love God above all. When the Father curses the Son, the Son must bless the name of the Father. At the depth of suffering and agony, at this bottom of hell, he must build an altar and render worship, loving God with all his heart and mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself. At the moment when God's Word sets him at nought, he must declare that God is all in all. He must bless the heart and hand that builds this awful equation for him, and cry: Amen, so let it be.

It is thus that the servant becomes the Son of Man, the Man of eschatological kingdom, power, and glory. By emptying himself, he becomes the One in whom God will sum up all things whether in heaven or earth. By becoming nameless, so that God must give him a name, he obtains a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus Everyman should bow and Everyman confess that he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.

* * *

How comforting to remember that Christ did this for us, something we could not do for ourselves, for we in our sin want to be like God. And how comfortable to forget that the pattern of Christ's life and death is the pattern God has set for our lives. How comfortable to forget that what we could not do for ourselves is now the pattern of what we must do for him!

Being now justified by his blood, how easy to continue to build up our own names that others may confess our names, how easy to enlarge the blueprints of our prestige for the greater enhancement of our own reputations. How painless it is for the Christian to repudiate Darwinianism and the while to live by the principle of self-preservation. How bloodless the effort of forgetting that it is true for Everyman, that he who would save his life shall lose it, and that only he who would lose his life for Christ's sake shall find it. How easy to admit and even proclaim that this is God's infallible Word and forth-

with in a lovelessness that knows no mercy to dispose of the life of others, if in so doing we may by any means attain unto the equation of greatness. How painless to give consent to the proposition that we must be set at nought, and then do nought but seek to prevent the Word of the Lord from coming to pass! How easy to agree that Christ is the pattern, and that the call is to take up the cross and follow him, and while we vocally agree, to reach for the crown instead of the cross, and to follow hard after each bit of honor and recognition that some person or institution may offer.

But to be set at nought, to set one's self at nought, how exceedingly difficult. How hard to sell all that one has and to follow Jesus, to tread the road that he trod, to show a Christ-like unconcern for one's own name. How much easier to follow the policy of practical prudence and careful calculation which guarantee that all men will speak well of us, while we ignore the Word of the Lord that we must become as nothing before God and man. How easy to follow the instinct of self-preservation — to cry against the evil that the masses hate, but remain silent about that which our heart condemns, because the masses are silent.

Yet God will set Everyman at nought, for he is determined that no flesh shall glory in his sight. Everyman is obliged to believe in election, in salvation by grace alone. He is obliged to set himself at nought — without falling into the pride that this will save him and make him great. Everyman must believe that not all his tears and sighs and prayers will give him peace with God. For only in the way of being as nothing before God, will God raise him into the heavenly glory and give him a new name. If we are not merely willing, but actually do lose our lives, we will find them again in a better resurrection. For the Resurrection follows not the willingness to die, but the fact of death.

And what of those persons, institutions, nations, cultures, that refuse to set themselves at nought and to become as nothing before God? They shall none the less be set at nought and reduced to nothing! For God will not punish sin less severely than he punished it in his own Son. All worldly wisdom and power within Christendom and outside of it, in the Church and in the world, God will bring to nought. For he is determined that no flesh shall

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Rev. Harry R. Boer, Dr. James Daane,
Rev. George Stob, Dr. Henry Stob,
Dr. Henry Zylstra

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glory in his sight. If any will glory
he will have to glory in the Lord, for
when history ends and life is done
there will be nothing else in which to
glory!

JAMES DAANE

Easter Song

The lilies lift their cups to catch the
dew;
The waxen petals gleam with pearly
light.
The cherry trees are laced with frosty
bloom,
The bush of bridal wreath is misty
white.

The moonlight sifts its silver on the
grass
Where drift and dune of winter snow
have lain.
Free from its icy sheath the shining
pool
Mirrors bright stars and clouds o
milky stain.

Christ came to earth when snow lay
cold and deep;
He went to heaven when trees were
white with spring.
Wake from your winter sleep, o earth
and bloom.
Shake off your fear of death, God's
child, and sing.

— MILDRED ZYLSTRA

Let the Bible Speak

By HARRY R. BOER

IN this article I should like to discuss the manner in which the Bible speaks of God's repentance in relation to his immutability. In last month's introductory discussion I suggested that there are especially two matters to keep in mind in approaching the problem. The first is that the doctrine of the immutability of God may not lead us to interpret out of existence those passages of Scripture which do not at first glance seem to square with this doctrine. On the contrary, the rule of the analogy of faith must be handled with the utmost conscience and lays upon us the burden of taking very seriously precisely those passages which speak of God's repentance, grief, disappointment, etc. Secondly, the Bible speaks to us about God by means of anthropomorphism, that is, it uses language drawn from human knowledge and experience to describe the divine being. There is no other way in which it can speak to us about God. With these two principles in mind -- which, I need hardly add, lie at the very heart of the Reformed interpretation of the Scriptures -- let us now go on to the problem.

God's Immutability

WHEN we speak about the immutability or unchangeableness of God, we must be careful to speak about it the way the Word of God speaks about it. This may seem to be a rather obvious and elementary observation. Actually, it is not. It is very easy to approach the Bible with a certain idea in mind, and then read the Bible in the light of that idea. The general definition of faith as a hopeful belief or expectation, for instance, hardly does justice to the scriptural conception of faith as *certain knowledge*. And the general definition of knowledge as an intellectual comprehension of this or that matter does not do justice to the scriptural conception of knowledge as profound *apprehension* and intimate *communion*. When we therefore speak about faith in God and knowing God, we can use these terms rightly only when we use them in the way in which the Bible uses them. We must be willing to let the Bible do its own defining of the language which it uses.

In their thinking about God's immutability Christians have not always worked with the biblical understanding of what the divine unchangeableness really means. They have allowed human and more especially philosophical conceptions to enter the picture. I think especially in this connection about the influence of Greek thought on Christian thinking. The great Greek philosopher, Aristotle, held to a supreme divine being whom he called the Unmoved Mover. By an attraction that went out from him he made the lower levels of being aspire to his steadfastness and perfection. But he was himself in no way affected or touched by them. He "moved" all things but was himself "unmoved" by any of them. This kind of immutability the Bible does not know. It pictures God, as Bavinck says, in the most manifold relations to his creatures. Unchangeable in himself, he lives along, as it were, with the life of his creatures and is concerned about the changeableness of their lot. A God unmoved by our sorrows and need, a God who does not bend down to meet us and to lift us up to Himself, the Bible does not know. Our God does not even remotely resemble the God of the philosophers. He is not a philosophically conceived block of granite subsisting somewhere in the heavens. As regards such a deity our God is indeed "Wholly Other."

The God of the Christian is the *covenant God*. He reveals himself as the covenant God. His unchangeableness is not presented in the Scriptures as an intellectual philosophical formula. The divine immutability of which the Bible speaks is in the first place *covenant keeping faithfulness*. God is *Jehovah*, the God of the covenant. Concerning him Moses witnessed to Israel, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations," Deut. 7:9. Through Malachi God tells Israel, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye, sons of Jacob, are not consumed," 3:12. And James says, "Every good and perfect gift is from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness or shadow that is cast by turning. Of his own will begot he us through the word of truth," 1:17, 18. God's unchange-

ableness is often presented in the Bible as a Rock, Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31, I Sam. 2:2, II Sam. 22:3, 32, Ps. 19:15 and many others. But in all of these he is presented as the Rock of our salvation, the Rock of our hope. He is our Rock and our Redeemer. The characteristic common element in all the above texts is the unchangeableness of God focussed in terms of covenant faithfulness.

The classic text in Scripture for the unchangeableness of God is Exodus 3:14, "And God said unto Moses, I Am that I Am. And he said unto him, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you." What was the occasion for this profound and comforting declaration?

God had commissioned Moses at the burning bush to deliver Israel. But Moses was fearful. He did not know how he would be received by the children of his people. This led him to ask God to identify himself by name: "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" Then it was that God spoke the beautiful words written above. The words "I Am that I Am" really mean, I ever shall be the same that I am today. The name "Jehovah," the great biblical name for the God of the covenant, is derived from the Hebrew verb "to be." Jehovah is the I AM, the unchangeable God of the covenant. He is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. This is his name for ever and this is his memorial unto all generations, vs. 15. The towering mountain peak in the chain of lofty witnesses to God's unchanging faithfulness points directly and sublimely to the Jehovah of the covenant. He is the unchangeable I AM. Yet he is moved by the sorrows of his children. "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians." This is the God whom Blaise Pascal knew and adored and worshipped when he cried out his unforgettable, "God! The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of

Let the Bible Speak — Continued

Jacob! Not the God of the philosophers . . .”

Here lies the rock of our personal faith. Here is the cornerstone of the certainty pledged us in our election. This thought must permeate all our theology and our preaching. It is not wrong, indeed, it is necessary, to draw implications from this for a Christian construction of science and philosophy. God's covenant faithfulness concerns nature as well as man, Gen. 8:22. But we shall always have to remember that God's revelation concerning himself is in the first place a *religiously* significant revelation.

We are called to preach the God of the Bible. Because we have *such* a God his counsel shall stand, his Church be gathered in, his elect brought to glory. And because we have such a God, a loving, righteous, faithful eternal Father, the Bible can speak of his *repenting*.

God's Repentance

WHEN we speak about God's repentance we must likewise speak about it the way in which the Word of God speaks about it. The Bible uses it very *seriously*. The expression “it repented God” is not used lightly in the Bible. It is used in connection with moments of the greatest significance in the history of revelation. When God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that all the imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually, it *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it *grieved* him at his heart, Gen. 6:6. When the Israelites corrupted themselves with idolatry while God gave the law to Moses, God said to him that he would consume the people and make a great nation of Moses. But Moses entreated for Israel and then “the Lord *repented* of the evil which he thought to do to his people,” Exod. 34:14. In a notable concern of God with a pagan nation, he commissioned Jonah to declare that yet forty days were allowed the city of Nineveh. But when its citizens turned from their wickedness “God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them and he did it not,” 3:10.

How these and similar passages (see esp. Jer. 18:5-10) are to be understood has engaged the attention of more than one theologian. The problem, as

I have earlier suggested, is even larger than these passages indicate. How are we, for instance, to understand a text like “Grieve not the Holy Spirit”? How can the perfect, immutable, ever-blessed God *grieve*? It will not do to just dismiss these expressions as merely “a way of speaking” or, what is still worse, as reflecting “a change in man.” When we try to relate this scriptural data to the immutability of God and to the unchangeableness of his eternal counsel, we may not rest in a solution that either takes scripture flippantly or that makes it say the opposite of what it actually says.

In a remarkable section in his *Het Godswoord der Profeten*, Vol. III, Dr. J. Ridderbos, treating this problem, uses the beautiful Dutch expression “de bewogenheid Gods.” The word “bewogenheid” is not easily translatable but its thrust is, to be deeply moved or touched. It must be seen, says Ridderbos, against the background of mystery, but this does not take away the fact that “in all that the prophets witness about the divine *bewogenheid* there comes to forceful expression the tremendous truth (*de geweldige waarheid*) that God stands in relation to man and to the world in a very real manner,” p. 169. His son, Dr. S. J. Ridderbos, in his booklet *Rondom Het Gemeene Gratie Probleem*, states this thought even more strongly. After saying that it is necessary to use anthropomorphism fearlessly in order not to lose the living God of the Bible he observes, “In our judgment there is great occasion today to underline this thought especially in Reformed circles. Calvinism with its scriptural confession of God's eternal, unchangeable decree has rightly set itself against the pantheistic notion of a ‘becoming God.’ But on the other side there threatens no less the danger that a stiff immutability doctrine will do despite to the sympathetic, the feeling character of God, to his living along with his creatures. The speaking of the Bible about God's *repentance*, etc., is then easily set aside as an ‘anthropomorphism’ and the ‘real thing’ is sought in God's immutability with which there is no variableness nor shadow that is cast by turning . . . It is true that we may not form such a conception of God's repentance and of God's ‘affections’ in general that his immutability would be denied. But no less must we be careful not to conceive of God's immutability as a stiff unemotionality (*starre onbewogenheid*)

whereby in our God-concept it would be simply impossible to do justice to the other line of the divine revelation.” (pp. 35, 36, my transl.)

Much further, if at all, we cannot go. “Explanations” do not satisfy. Two of these, namely that expressions relating to God's repentance are merely ways of speaking, and that they represent a change in the creature, have already been rejected as unsatisfactory on the face of them. But there are other explanations. One is that since God's repentance is taken up in his counsel, his immutability is unaffected by his repentance. This is undoubtedly true, but it is no more a solution than the other two. It still leaves the nature of the repentance to be accounted for. Another explanation is that the change indicated by the word repentance refers to a change in God's attitude to man and not to a change in God himself. But here we must consider what an “attitude” is. My attitude to my neighbor, for instance, is not something that exists outside of me. It exists *in* me. It is an expression of my person to my neighbor. God loves us because he *is* love and his attitude of love to us is therefore an expression of his being in its relationship to us.

Let us be careful with our ready definitions. We can know God. We can love God. We can apprehend God. We can hold his hand, we can rest in his mercy, enjoy his peace. But we cannot comprehensively define him. The Church has never tried to make the Christian faith acceptable to human reason by constructing such a definition. Rather, it set forth the scriptural conception of God and held error and heresy at bay by using negative expressions which yet conveyed a positive meaning and content. The church said: God is unchangeable, that is, *not* changeable; God is independent, that is, *not* dependent on anything or any one outside himself; God is eternal, that is, *not* subject to time. With respect to the mysterious relationship between the divine and the human in Christ it has confessed that the two natures are *not* mixed, *not* changed, *not* divided, *not* separated (Chalcedon). On the other hand, where it has been possible to speak about God in positive terms without endangering the scriptural God-concept it has not hesitated to do so. We therefore confess God's goodness, mercy, love, justice, etc.

We have, at least in the Christian Reformed Church, been brought up to look with suspicion on expressions that

take God's repentance seriously, that present God's repentance as a real and living aspect of his relationship to men. But this ought to cause us large concern. The reason for this concern will be plain when the question is asked: May we say what the Bible says when we mean what the Bible means? I am bold enough to assume that the answer to this question is in the affirmative. But if that is true, how is any honest reading of the following section from Jeremiah 18 to be understood: "If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." God will *repent* of the evil that he *thought* to do, he will *repent* of the good wherewith he *said* he would benefit. The Hebrew word for "thought" in the text above quoted means to think, to meditate, to purpose. The Hebrew word for "repent" means to rue, to regret, to grieve, in connection with one's own actions. The Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament), therefore, rather regularly translates the Hebrew word for repentance, also in connection with God's repentance, with the word *metanoia*, which means to change one's mind. It is clear therefore that in the words of Jeremiah there are involved in the first part a change of mind, and in the second part a change in expressed intention.

The mystery of the relationship between God's immutability and his repentance does not involve a contradiction. The words "He is not a man that he should repent" (I Sam. 15:29b) do not contradict God's repentance as presented in Moses, Jeremiah and Jonah. The Bible does not mean to say in one place that God changes and in another that, in the same sense, he does not change. Clearly the same word is used in two senses. God does not repent as frail and changeable men do — this emphasizes his unchangeableness and covenant faithfulness. The Strength of Israel or, also, Israel's Unchangeable One (*not* the philosophical or theological abstract immutable God-concept, no, the Strength of *Israel*, I Sam. 15:29a) will not lie nor repent. And — God does repent. This sets forth his profoundly personal concern with man-

kind, and in particular with his children. It seems quite plain what the Lord means by it. And it also seems quite plain that he did not think it unsafe to say it. It should therefore not be unsafe for us to say it after him. When a theological mentality develops in the Church that makes it ecclesiastically unsafe to say what the Bible says when it is made quite plain that in so speaking one means what the Bible means, then it is time for the Church to subject its theological mentality to earnest scrutiny and to inquire seriously whether it is minded to subject itself to the mind of the Word and of the Spirit. We must by all means guard against a so-called orthodoxy that wants to turn divine mystery into human system and schematization. We never have the right to erect fences for the protection of the Word which are repugnant to the Word. To do this is the death of theology and the undermining of true religion in the Church of God. To the extent that it becomes unsafe for the Church to live by the whole Word, the full Word, to that extent the Church ceases to be the pillar and ground of truth which God ordained it to be. Let us hold fast as a cornerstone of our prophetic witness that we may say what the Bible says provided we mean what the Bible means.

God's repentance witnesses to his meeting us where we are and as we are. It is a warning against pride and jealousy (Jonah), against covenant breaking (Israel), against reliance on our own goodness (Jeremiah), and it is an invitation to the most sinful to enter upon the obedience and sorrow for sin that God demands (Jeremiah). It is the Father's way of achieving his purposes and of communicating the benefits and the penalties of his covenant. "In God's repentance the immutable counsel of his redemption is realized. His name is Jehovah: I am that I am, in my divine love and faithfulness. Therefore the immutability of God cannot be better described than in the words, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.'" (Dutch standard Reformed exposition, *Het Dogma der Kerk*, H.A.L. v d Linden, p. 134, my transl.)

Christ and the Impossible Possibility

How important it is that we take this aspect of God's self-revelation seriously, and how important it is that we refuse to accept any conception of

God's immutability which threatens to depersonalize the God of the covenant, becomes immediately apparent when we consider the question of prayer in connection with our problem. How did Christ conceive of God's counsel in its significance for his prayer-life? Was it for him a cut and dried affair that made a puppet dance out of his communion with the Father? There is a pretty picture of Christ in Gethsemane that hangs in nearly every Sunday-school room. We see Jesus' hands calmly folded on the rock before him, face serenely lifted to heaven, moon shining softly on the kneeling figure. If herein we think to see Christ's *struggle* rather than the *result* of the struggle we romanticize this awful hour of our Lord's agony. For the struggling Christ dwelt in the awful isolation of his friends' sleeping indifference to his ordeal. We read that he fell on his face and prayed, soul sorrowful unto death, sweat turning to blood. In his suffering he prayed. What did he pray? Was he the philosopher, the theological abstractionist, who had it all neatly figured out? Did he in the hour of crisis calmly contemplate the counsel of God for his life and conclude that he must simply be the instrument to carry it out? How did he pray? He entertained the impossible possibility! He entertained the impossible possibility that God had the power to change his counsel, his immutable counsel, his revealed counsel, his plainly known to Christ counsel. From the depths of agony, and shrinking with his perfect human sensitivity from the ordeal that was almost upon him, he prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will but what thou wilt."

What was God's counsel for his life? The cross! What was the cup which he asked the Father to take away? The cross! What was the purpose of his coming to earth, of his walk among men? The cross! He came to give his life a ransom for many, to lay it down for his sheep, and he had gone up to Jerusalem to suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and to be killed and raised again the third day. He came to fulfill in history the divine counsel that made him the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. His whole life was directed to the cross, on the cross he cried "it is finished," and around the cross centers all the witness of the Church. Christ and him *crucified*! And now he stands before this moment, before this center

Let the Bible Speak — Continued

of all history, before this central determination of God's counsel and he prays, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; take away this cup from me . . ." No, it was not possible. Christ knew it could not be. Avoidance of the cup had been suggested within the inner circle, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Christ had turned on Peter with an unheard of severity, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me." But yet he entertained the impossible possibility, submitted it in prayer to the Father of all mercy and comfort and wisdom. And then he himself overruled it! "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." This was the victory, and an angel from heaven came and strengthened him.

It is so easy to be the spectator of another man's struggle, of another man's effort, of another man's striving to articulate the faith that is in him, to

set forth the sense of Scripture in its meaning for the life of the Church. And then we can so quickly unlimber the theological heavy artillery that was constructed to bear on other targets, and blast such effort, such striving, such presentation of the sense of Scripture, as "unReformed." Schilder speaks for Christ, speaks for all who want to walk in his footsteps, when he comments: Christ in his agony was not an intellectual aristocrat who comforted himself with syllogisms and from them concluded that the conflict between duty and human sensitivity after all found a unity in God's being and thought. No, not with the maxims of the philosophers but, *Out of the depths, O Lord, I cry to thee! Out of our depths, out of the depths of the limitations of the short horizon of our vision. From these depths Christ struggled upward, upward by faith until he came to rest and vic-*

tory at the boundary between prayer for life and command unto death.

Tonight, sitting in Amsterdam and trying in some way to share in the sorrow of a national tragedy, I joined the radio listeners while a Reformed leader led in preaching and in prayer. He said — *Wij komen er niet uit* — we cannot find our way out of this problem which our faith presents. God is in the storm, God comes in judgment, and yet he comes also in mercy. And he warned against easy solutions, warned against being cold spectators, cold theological analysts.

The acceptance of God's will often involves a struggle. Christ in the garden, the farmer at the broken dyke, parents at the grave of a hope that is no more — God's counsel ordained it all. But as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. God keep us from so construing his unchangeableness that we lose the Father whose unchangeableness is our comfort in the hour of trial.

"United Youth"

By GEORGE STOB

A joint Committee, composed of representatives of the American Federation of Young Women's Societies and the Young Calvinist Federation, has prepared a tentative draft for a United Youth Organization among the young people of the Christian Reformed Church. The Committee is concerned about getting some comment on its outline of the proposed plan.

At present the young people's organizations of our churches are spread over two separate but cooperating Federations — the AFRYWS and the YCF. In addition there are in many of our churches mixed young people's societies which are affiliated with neither of these Federations. There are, finally, scattered groups of Boys' Clubs and Girls' Clubs, likewise without any Federation affiliation.

The plan above referred to proposes the gathering of all these youth organizations together into one united young people's federation, tentatively called UNITED YOUNG CALVINIST FEDERATION. The pattern of organization would be as follows:

I. On the *Congregational* level there are the various youth societies come to societies, young women's societies, life in the local church — young men's

young people's societies, boys' clubs, and girls' clubs.

II. *The District League.* For the promotion of their common interests and for the prosecution of a common program of action, the various church societies in a given geographical area will be united in a district League. When desired the young men's societies and young women's societies will be permitted to continue their own separate leagues for specific purposes.

III. *The National Federation.* Meanwhile the various church societies are to be united as well on a national scale in a national federation, for the promotion of interests and needs which all our young people have in common, and for the prosecution of a program of action of national (or denominational) scope. The National Federation would prepare and distribute handbooks and study manuals, publish a youth periodical, act as coordinating agency for national (or denominational) youth programs, and sponsor national conferences or youth rallies.

This, in broad outline, is the pattern of the proposed organization. Now for some comments.

THE plan assuredly commends itself as sensible, logical, and as consistent with the natural order of relationships.

This expression of the unity of our young people is consistent with the unity that exists within the communion of the Church. As our people are *one people*, so our young people are *one young people* — and I see no justification for separating them rigidly in terms of the category of sex. In the body of Christ "there is neither male nor female, but ye are all one in Christ Jesus." It is good to see that some steps are being taken to join our Christian young people together at least in terms of District and National organization. That is starting at the top end, but it is better to start there than not to start at all.

It may be best of all if the united youth principle were carried down to the congregational level — so that the national united youth movement might be an extended expression of the united youth in a congregation. The long-prevailing dualism between young men's societies and young women's societies seems unnatural and unsalutary. It encourages the unhealthy notion that the

opposite sexes exist for dating, marriage, and eventually procreation. They do not, of course. The basic fact about the sexes is that they together make up the rich fullness of human companionship. God made Eve because it was not good for Adam to be alone. No more is it good for either young men or young women to be either alone or separate in significant areas of life today. We ought to do all we can to encourage among our young men and women a more natural and healthy companionship.

Nor is it enough to suggest that they can get together at social affairs. They should come together in sacred communion and study. By what stretch of the imagination can it be thought right or profitable for our young people to meet *separately* for Bible study, discussion of problems and challenges in the young Christian life, or discussion of matters relating to marriage, home, Christian education, and the Church. They will be expected to share these things crucially as soon as they are married. Why should they not be prepared for them by having some experience of sharing them in young people's societies? We cannot suppose that we can leave this preparation to private parlor communion, parental lecture, or an occasional pulpit pronouncement. The United youth movement is right because it is God-ordained, natural, and appropriate. Young men and young women may have their separate meetings on occasion, when the situation requires or advises it. But this ought to be the exception — and not, as it is now, the unnatural rule.

The united youth principle should be carried out in practice at the congregational level. If not, it appears that with the proposed united youth program we shall be obeying some part of the law but leaving the weightier part undone. It is a fine thing for young men and young women to meet together in district and national conferences and rallies, but it is yet the least of what a united youth principle requires. And even the united youth rallies would lose much of their point and effectiveness, if after the stimulus and inspiration of that meeting of minds and spirits it should be said to them — Go back now to your churches, and to your separate meetings, one for each sex.

Even so, the proposed united youth movement is a step in the right direction. Perhaps it is easier to break down the barriers in the broader structure —

and it may lead to the breaking down of the unnatural barriers that exist in the narrower structure. This much is certain — it may help to provide us with a more suitable and more lively youth publication.

I have been an appreciative subscriber to the *Young Calvinist* for about as long as I can remember. There are many things I like about it. But there is one thing I don't quite like. The *Young Calvinist* is too compartmentalized. I run into one set of Bible outlines, all but designed "For Men Only." Then I run into another set of Bible outlines — by and for the female sex. Two sets of Bible outlines — a waste of energy and space, and a loss of the values of a shared study! The first section of the paper, starting off with the virile editorials of Mr. Postma, down through the letters and pictures of the rugged GIs, is strictly masculine. Only, somehow "Constance" infiltrates the Men's section, and even though she speaks well about social adjustments, she herself looks fairly out of place there. And then, as I page through, I come to the "Young Women's Department," and I invariably tread lightly and warily, for when I read such things as "We the Women," I have a suspect feeling that I ought not to be there. However, I'd like to read about "the challenge of missionary nursing," not in somebody else's department but in *our* paper — as something in which I, too, am vitally interested. And perhaps some young lady would like to read about "the challenge to the Christian ministry," not in the men's department, but in a youth paper — as something in which she as a church-member is vitally interested, even if she is without either prospect or care of becoming a "juffrouw."

Let's have a united youth paper, by all means, with one set of Bible study outlines for both young men and young women to follow, and a discussion of problems and interests common to all our young people. And perhaps there are, after all, men who can write in a tidy manner and with sensitive taste, as well as women who can write with vigor and forthrightness.

* * *

BYOND this major observation, I have one or two other comments.

I notice that the proposal for district league organizations allows that young men and young women's societies may "continue their own separate leagues for specific purposes." Isn't this, in some part at least, an invitation to a

breach in the very organization which is contemplated? If separate leagues may function, why not separate *federations* — for specific purposes? Why not be thoroughly consistent at least on the broader organizational level, and propose a united league as well as a united federation? Either of these may still sponsor separate meetings or programs as the occasion may seem to require. Thus, separate needs — such as exist — may yet be cared for, but under the auspices of an agency which belongs to all and is concerned with each.

I have a question, too, about what seems to me the undue breadth of the proposed united youth organization, — specifically, the inclusion in it of boys' and girls' clubs. This, I suspect, is too wide a spread for a united youth organization. Young people are young people, but boys and girls in the lower teens are boys and girls. There is here a line of separation — and it is not an unnatural one. The matter requires more discussion than I can offer at this time — the whole question of boys' and girls' clubs being a unique problem to which we ought more carefully to address ourselves. In any event, one wouldn't expect any profitable participation in league or federation meetings on the part of boys and girls. Programs for boys and girls have their own character, and I can conceive of their being good sense and value in having separation organization and administration as well as a separate publication for boys and girls — that is to say, if we are quite sure we must have boys' and girls' clubs.

* * *

WE all owe a large debt of thanks to our youth leaders and youth committees for the energy and thought they have given to the interests of our youth. Meanwhile, none of us ought to forget that the basic responsibilities rest upon those closest to our young people in their daily life — parents, teachers, elders, ministers, society leaders. Organization is important, but not of primary importance. And after we have constructed the finest organization, everything still depends upon the spirit and character of the care given to our youth in the local church and in the local area. Organization needs a soul. The soul of our youth organizations is the intelligence, character, idealism, and piety of our young people. We who are closest to them every day have a weighty charge, under God, to help fashion that soul.

Johannes Groen

By JACOB G. VANDEN BOSCH

WHEN the Reverend Johannes Groen died in Los Angeles in the year 1924, one of the most commanding personalities in the Christian Reformed Church disappeared from the scene of action. A voice that had been heard for some thirty years in the pulpit and in the deliberative gatherings of the church ceased to speak. The influence of a forceful character came to an end.

The data that make up his life story are not many. As to external detail that life was uneventful. He was born in Vriesland on a small farm, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. J. Groen, sturdy pioneers and God-fearing people. With his parents he attended the Christian Reformed Church, which at one time was a flourishing parish served by such as W. H. Frieling, L. Rietdyk, G. K. Hemkes, G. D. De Jong, and T. M. Vanden Bosch, but is no longer in existence. When he was young, he was rather an undisciplined and colorful figure among the young people of his community, but a marked change came over him spiritually and there crystallized in his soul a strong desire to be used of God in His kingdom. Accordingly, in the fall of 1884 he entered the Theological School from which he graduated after seven years of study in 1891. He served only three churches: First Zeeland from 1891 to 1900; Eastern Avenue, Grand Rapids, from 1900 to 1920; Los Angeles from 1920 to 1924.

It was not the advantage of a thorough education that made Groen a power in the life of the church. His elementary education had been meager. The story is related that when he presented himself for admission to the Theological School and was requested to write an essay on a chapter in Romans, he, unable to transfer his thoughts to paper, desperately resorted to an improvisation. Perhaps Rev. G. K. Hemkes, the new professor, who had been Groen's pastor in the Vriesland church, spoke a word in his favor. At any rate, he was accepted as a student and graduated in due time. Four years of literary and three years of theological education is all he ever had. Nevertheless, Groen in his life and work demonstrated what only seven years of schooling enable a serious person to

do. Undoubtedly, heredity also deserves some credit for what Groen was, became, and accomplished. His father was a member of considerable importance in the church at Vriesland. Besides, he was a Frisian. Lastly, the pastoral labors of Rev. L. Rietdyk and Rev. G. K. Hemkes may have left a lasting impression on the boy.

But though Groen had but a limited education, he took full advantage of his opportunities. Driven by his curious mind and urged on by the desire to be more efficient in his ministerial work, he made up by private study such subjects as seemed to him important. So, for example, he pursued the study of pedagogy in order that he might be a better teacher, realizing as few did how important the teaching function of the ministry is. The teachers in the Sunday School profited greatly from such study, for his treatment of the lesson at a teachers' meeting was always interspersed with helpful pedagogical hints. He had a clear and retentive mind so that he understood what he studied and remembered what he once mastered. The end of his formal schooling was not the end of his education. In a sense, life was his college or university. Even as a young minister he owned a respectable library, with the riches of which he was by no means unacquainted.

Rev. Groen was a preacher of remarkable power. His imposing physique, his rich voice, his unaffected delivery, his clearness of statement, the actuality of his message — all these made him a pulpiteer of note. The power to hold an audience never left him. The content of his sermons was always worthwhile. Never did he let himself down to the level of his hearers, nor did he hesitate to be severely critical. Always his aim was to be instructive and uplifting. Even in his highest flights of eloquence the audience could not detect the end of his resources or any straining of his powers.

THERE was scarcely a single activity of the church that did not feel the impact of Groen's dynamic personality. Societies contributing to the

well being of the church he actively fostered. The Sunday School found in him a vigorous support and a doughty defender because he saw in it an agency that stood for a direct study of the Bible and a means of preparing men and women for active participation in Kingdom work. With might and main he opposed all efforts to outlaw the Sunday School. Missions aroused in him an unfailing interest. Because America owed a debt to the dispossessed aborigines he favored bringing the gospel to the Indians before sending missionaries to foreign fields. The sending of our first missionaries to the Navajos and Zunis was for him an event of great rejoicing. The movement to transform the literary department into a Calvinistic college enlisted his unstinted endeavors. Usually one found Rev. Groen in the front rank of those who advocated worthy causes. He was a leader.

Though he exerted so wide an influence that he could not be ignored, he was never spoiled by excessive honors. The only honor a synod ever conferred upon him was to elect him vice president. This was in 1908. Since that time he was but seldom a delegate to Synod and not at all a member of the Board of Trustees of seminary and college. As he grew older, there developed a degree of estrangement between him and his brethren of the cloth. He became a lonely figure on the ecclesiastical scene.

Born and reared in America, Rev. Groen was an ardent patriot. He was also an ardent Calvinist, but he wished his religious faith to be free from foreign flavor that might arouse hostility to it. It had to function in American life. Evangelical America might be Arminian, overwhelmingly so, but Groen believed that Calvinism should be a leaven in American culture. Was it not a life and world view as well as a religion of salvation from sin? To an *imperium in imperio* he was averse with all that was in him. His patriotism led him to study the American scene and the forces operating in it and he came to the conclusion that not by isolation, but by a sympathetic understanding could Calvinism be a vital

force in the life of his country. His joining the interdenominational minister's conference of Grand Rapids was illustrative of his attitude. Elected president, he began the practice of giving at each meeting a devotional talk based on a portion of Scripture, and saw to it that Calvinism had a witness in this body. This policy, however, though it secured for him the admiration of the conference, did not make for popularity in his own circle.

In his early years Rev. Groen's outlook was decidedly provincial and traditional, but the independent spirit of the man, enriched by study and experience, led him to see the futility of such an outlook and caused him to throw off some of the old restraints. If, fresh from the seminary, he was preeminently doctrinal in his preaching, he soon felt the need of suiting his messages to the every day life of his parishioners. If in his younger days he defended the right of the Christian to an occasional use of alcoholic beverages, he early in his career came to favor prohibition and was one of the leaders in his community in the fight for local option. If at first he shared the current distrust of labor unions, he as pastor of a large city church composed chiefly of working men felt obliged to make a study of the principles of unionism, and, finding nothing in the constitution of the American Federation of Labor to which a Christian could object, championed a more generous policy toward the labor movement. When woman suffrage became a vital issue, he had the courage to favor it even though it meant for him much grief and some suffering because of strong opposition on the part of his own people.

IN short, Rev. Groen was a growing man. Never did he lose the urge to make a study of new issues; never did the spirit of inquiry flag. And withal he was a man of foresight, of vision. He discerned the emergence of new issues long before others were aware of them. Straightway he would acquaint himself with the history and principles of a rising cause and take such stand as he thought was right. He refused to be taken by surprise. When any issue became a subject for discussion in ecclesiastical councils, he was prepared to state his views and defend them. He outwitted his contemporaries

with his foresight. If this was one of the sources of his power, it also showed how alert a spirit lived in Groen's soul. To him the words of Tennyson's *Ulysses* are strikingly applicable:

*How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use.*

With what a great soul God had endowed this lad brought up on the twenty acres of rich Vriesland clay. Though he became pastor of two congregations large enough to demand every bit of energy and devotion he could muster, he was not satisfied. There was in him the noble rage of discontent. In a confidential moment occasioned by the death of one of his children, the strong man who was wont to keep his sorrows to himself, allowed me to get a glimpse not only of the grief, but also of the sublime thoughts that filled his soul. The chief burden of his sorrow was not the loss of a dear one, though this was pungent enough, but the fact that he had been able to do so little for the Kingdom of God. Since Christianity is universal in its nature, he yearned to do something for the cause of Christ that would be of world-wide significance. His plaint was that because of his limited education he would never be able to realize his ambition. Verily, a man with such lofty idealism living in his soul was not meant for the performance of small tasks. He could be satisfied with nothing less than with projects that held the promise of universal and eternal significance.

This ambitious spirit of the man can also partially be accounted for by the time in which he lived. The thirty years of his career were highly important because they were years of transition. A spirit of dissatisfaction with that which was old and a yearning for something new was in the air. The transition was accelerated by what the dying of an old and the birth of a new century suggested to certain sensitive souls, and, above all, by the sudden outbreak of World War I. Changes were going on in all areas of thought and activity, in world politics, in philosophy and theology, in the sciences, in literature and the arts. Some of these were nothing less than upheavals. Rev.

Groen may not have been articulately conscious of all these changes, but he intuitively knew that he was living in a changing world and he felt the necessity of being alert. To be blind to what was going on and smugly to cling to tradition was, in his opinion, sheer folly. It was a Christian's duty to take note of new movements and to study their history and nature so as to be able to judge them intelligently. All unworthy prejudices had to be laid aside. In trying the spirits whether they were of God the sole touchstone to be used was the Bible.

If we wish to characterize the subject of our sketch with one comprehensive term, we perhaps do best by calling him a progressive conservative. The fundamental truths of Calvinism which he had imbibed in home and church and school assumed clearer, deeper, richer meaning by sitting at the feet of Dr. Geerhardus Vos, whom he admired till his dying day as a great teacher, and by reading the works of Dr. A. Kuyper, Dr. H. Bavinck, and other stalwarts of the Reformed faith. From these men Groen also got the spirit of progress. How he disliked anything stagnant. His Calvinism must be progressive. It must be able to cope with every modern situation and to inform it with its spirit. If it could not do this, it was not worthy of the claim to be a life and world view.

Both as conservative and as progressive Rev. Groen was a militant figure. A dynamic personality whose soul is restless until it is a participant in efforts that have a world wide significance must, it seems, necessarily be so. The grilling to which he and his classmate, G. A. De Haan, had to submit at their final examination because they held the supralapsarian view left a scar in his consciousness, and perhaps had something to do with evoking this militant spirit. Though respected and even feared, militant characters are not often loved. And Rev. Groen was not. Had he been a little more considerate of the convictions of others and a trifle more conciliatory in his attitude towards opponents, he might have accomplished more than he did.

The final word of this brief life history must be that Reverend Johannes Groen was a man with a great soul.

High School and College

By HENRY ZYLSTRA

THE more I reflect on the educational justification of Junior Colleges, the more I come to the conclusion that what we ought to do to meet the needs of the several localities is to add a year to the Christian high schools.

In our present educational situation, the proposed Junior Colleges would hardly be doing college work anyhow. In our present educational situation, four-fifths of the work of the first year, and about half of the work of the second year, would be high school work.

My thought is that we ought to arrange things in such a way that what I have been calling "the fundamentals" would be achieved in the secondary school and that what I have been calling "the philosophy" would continue to be achieved in the university college.

In a way this would be to make our Christian high schools the equivalent in this respect of the better American private academies, such as Groton or Andover Phillips, and of the Canadian five-year secondary institutions, and of the Dutch Gymnasiums and Hoogere Burger Scholen.

For the fact is that in our present educational situation the college has only three years for its philosophical work anyhow. For most students *most* of the first year's work and *much* of the second year's work goes into the fundamentals at college.

In our present educational situation, this would be so in the proposed Junior Colleges also. Hence the pertinent question arises: Does it make sense to be teaching fundamentals at both ends of town? Does it make sense to be teaching rudimentary languages and elementary mathematics in something called a college in Sioux Center when they can be taught in Western Christian High School at Hull?

You will recall what I mean by fundamentals. I mean the *college preparatory* work of basic languages, basic mathematics, basic discipline in speaking, writing, and music, and a basic core of historical and scientific fact.

Those fundamentals are the subjects which our junior high schools and our high schools are, from the nature of their institutions, equipped to teach. They are equipped to teach two or more years of Latin, German, French, and could be readied to teach Dutch. Time was, too, when they taught Greek. They

can teach the basic mathematics from advanced arithmetic through the trigonometry and the advanced algebra. The thing is regularly done in the best English, Canadian, and Dutch schools. These high schools and junior high schools can also provide the formal discipline of speech and writing and music. And they can supply a core of historic, literary, and scientific fact.

Those fundamentals, however, are also the subjects which now occupy most of the basic college time of the student. For most students, in other words, college begins about the middle of the second year. Here, for instance, is a fairly typical Freshman program in college in our present educational situation:

Beginning Latin (to be continued in the second year, probably supplemented by beginning German)

Algebra (advanced, sometimes; sometimes, introductory)

English (punctuation, spelling, parts of speech, composition)

Public Speaking (elementary speech making)

Bible (Introduction to the books of the Bible)

Natural Science (properly on a college level, unless it be Physics)

It is a liberal estimate to say of that program that four-fifths of it is high school work. It is important work. Every bit of it is indispensable as a preparation for college. But it is work in fundamentals, proper to the high school. We can do it at Chicago Christian and at Illiana. We do not have to set up a separate institution for it. And if we teach it in the high schools we do not have to teach it in the college also.

Sometimes we get a student at our college from one of the better, classically organized, Canadian five-year secondary schools. Such a student on occasion comes with four years of Latin, two of French, some German sometimes, some science, a good grasp of history, thorough discipline in writing, and ready, almost, for the Calculus. Sometimes we get such a student from a Dutch Gymnasium or its equivalent.

This kind of student starts out at the college as virtually a sophomore. He is *ready*, as the Rugby and Eton boy is ready in England, and the Groton boy is ready in the East, for philosophical

work at the university college. And my thought is that we take our cue from these schools, and that we put the first year of "college" into the fifth year of high school.

Consider what it would do for us. It would spare much of the cost (\$400,000 shall we say, for the initial building and \$60,000 annually for administration, staff, and maintenance) of setting up Junior Colleges. It would enable the college to intensify in its thoroughgoing work. It would salvage a year of home life for the student — his youngest college year, too — and it would save him the going-away-from-home cost of a year's schooling. It would put the responsibility for achieving fundamentals where it belongs: in the schools. This would be an educationally purgative and disciplinary challenge. True it is hard, in the several communities to maintain Latin and trigonometry but the Junior Colleges promise to do it in those communities, and the high schools must be able to do it too. This scheme, moreover, would dignify and reinforce the high schools by better staffing all around.

There is a rub in this matter, I know. I am not referring to the fact that basic languages and mathematics, and such when taught by college professors to maturer students, are likely to be achieved better. There is some truth in that, I know, and I have been leaving it out of the equation. But these fundamentals, when well and sustainedly taught in the high school, are adequate to the purpose. All that is required is that they be continued on the college plane. The Latin must become Vergil the algebra must become Numerical Equations.

The major rub is that, in our country people who are in their thirteenth year of school want to think that they are in college. That is the way we have come to measure education in our country by calendar years. We have agreed to call the thirteenth through the sixteenth years the college years. Whether what goes on in the college is any different in kind from what goes on in the high school is a thing of no importance. Students get college credit for it. Our students, in necessary social and economic interdependence with them, want such credit too.

The difficulty, therefore, is: Can we afford to penalize our young men and women by denominating their first year of "college" a fifth year of high school?

There is no gratifying solution to this difficulty. But something can be said in compensation. For one thing, we ought to be willing to pay quite a price for more clarity and definition in our education than there is in education generally. Our good sense in this respect might even prove us to be the salt of the earth. Moreover, the difficulty would not hold for those who went on through the university college. They would get the same degree as the rest of the world. True, the student who breaks off before the end, would be at a disadvantage. For him our solidly organized five-year institutions would have to develop a recognized prestige of their own. They might even come to serve as types and models of what ought to be done in the country generally.

No doubt, there are other difficulties. That science course of the Freshman year, for example, that one-fifth roughly of college work in the year, that we can ill afford to lose. The future physicists, chemists, doctors, nurses, and the like, can hardly do without it. But physics, chemistry, and biology are precisely the subjects — what with the cost of the differing laboratories for each — which would fare badly in the Junior Colleges too.

Some may say that, once the fifth year is added to the high school, the college will begin to insist that it still needs four years for a thoroughly philosophical, spiritual, scientific education. It may be so. But at least there would be no loss as compared with the present situation.

But enough of the difficulties. My thought is that it makes for poor economy and poor educational policy to duplicate institutions in one and the same community for doing one and the same kind of work. We can do such work in Paterson, Chicago, Illiana, Northern Michigan, Western Michigan, Holland, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Unity, Pella, Hull, Denver, Lynden, Ripon, and Belflower. We may as well correct things down below as try for another chance up above. And we can do it. We can do it by clarifying objectives, distinguishing between kinds of students,

tightening up all down the line, and by adding a year.

* * *

IN this series I have been arguing all along that we ought not to let an "educational situation" in which colleges cannot be colleges to go uncorrected, and then to adapt ourselves to the situation by setting up more colleges. I have been concerned to stress the necessity of preserving the integrity of Christian college education. It is a concern to keep college education the kind of medium in which the Christian meaning of life can be substantially realized.

I now append a few loosely jotted notes for emphasis and amplification.

It is said that some of our young men and women are attracted to colleges other than Calvin. One way to counteract this would seem to be, not so much to set up a college nearby, but to make Calvin indispensably excellent. Yale and Princeton and Stanford do not have to drum up business. Their problem is altogether one of elimination. Besides, Christian Reformed people, fully aware of the challenges and responsibilities of being Christian in our time, will want a Reformed university college for their training.

* * *

The cost of sending young people to Calvin College need not be construed as an argument for the establishment of Junior Colleges. When the hard facts of cost are eventually confronted, it may well become evident that for our church community as a whole the new mode of conducting higher education would be costlier than the present one.

* * *

If there is unjustifiable imbalance between the cost of the Michigan student and the cost of the California student, this imbalance can be corrected in other ways besides building further institutions. These ways, for the most part still unexplored, include scholarship funds, tuition reduction and exemption, travel allowance, and denomination-wide responsibility in whole or part for housing and board.

* * *

Speaking of needs, we need better grammar schools worse than we need Junior Colleges. We need better high schools worse than we need Junior Colleges. And we need a thoroughly developed Calvin College worse than we need Junior Colleges.

* * *

Because college education is qualitative, not quantitative, in character, the same qualifications are required for basic college teaching that are required for advanced college teaching. Philosophy is practically operative from top to bottom. Hence it makes no sense, for instance, to say that Masters of Arts can teach in the basic college, but that Doctors of Philosophy are required by the senior college. Both require the philosophical scholar.

* * *

Christian school teachers most particularly need a thoroughgoing scientific or philosophical training. They must also know fundamentals, of course. And they need some professional skills. To give them the fundamentals plus the professional training, however, as would happen in two-year teacher-training Junior Colleges, would be to sacrifice the indispensable third thing: philosophy.

* * *

It is sometimes said that the local student does not come back from the central institution to teach in his home community. The thought is that, once he has a thorough education and is well-equipped, he is wanted elsewhere too, and that he goes there. But the solution to this difficulty cannot be to keep him from the best that can be had, and so to make him unwanted by others. It may be that the best often tend to gravitate to the centers. Must we level the hills, then, fill in the valleys, and all live on a plateau?

I told this story in these columns before. It concerned a farmer who put a man to work stacking hay. "Keep the center solid and full," he said, "and the sides will take care of themselves." If, in haying, this advice is not taken, the stack rots.

Benediction in Florida?

By GEORGE STOKES

I see by the Church papers that services of worship have been held regularly under the auspices of Reformed believers in St. Petersburg and Bradenton, Florida.

The winter trek to the warm and sunny south finds many Reformed and Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed people in places where churches of the Reformed persuasion do not exist. But Reformed Hollanders feel pretty strongly about the worship and preaching of their own tradition. And they have made arrangements for the supply of it at the place and during the time of their winter sojourning. They have organized chapel groups, obtained a regular place of meeting, and each Sunday are served by the ministry of either Reformed or Christian Reformed ministers.

Summer arrangements are similarly made in places where there is a large enough concentration of Reformed people to make it possible. In fact, chapels have been built for precisely the same purpose at Gun Lake and Big Star Lake in Michigan. These, too, are served every Sunday during the summer vacation by either Reformed or Christian Reformed ministers.

In these places Sunday worship is just about as it was at home. There are the songs, the prayers, the offerings, the reading of the Law, reciting of the Apostles' Creed, and the preaching. And sometimes the minister raises his hands above the assembled worshippers to speak the salutation and the benediction.

There has been some question about the propriety of this last — the ministerial pronouncement of the blessing. The question has been very interestingly discussed by the Rev. Martin Monsma in *De Wachter*, the Dutch weekly of the Christian Reformed Church (Dec. 2, 30, 1952).

The Rev. Monsma quite positively condemns the ministerial pronouncement of the blessing at these chapel services. It appears to him as without Scriptural warrant, and an evil that may be attributed to confused thinking and to a "certain concessiveness that arises out of superficiality."

I should like to carry the discussion a bit further. For the question is of some interest — touching as it does upon the office of the ministry, the na-

ture of the church, and the communal exercise of worship. Furthermore, the question is quite relevant, since the chapel assemblies of worshipping believers are now being held with some regularity almost the year round. And the question must be of real concern to those who attend these services, since if it is judged wrong for a minister to pronounce the blessing at such worship, the worshipper might feel a bit uneasy and not quite blessed for receiving it.

* * *

ONE might very well ask why the practice just referred to must be counted wrong.

The crucial consideration, in Rev. Monsma's judgment, is the nature of the assembly. He feels it is important to distinguish "between a congregational gathering for an official service of the Word, and a free assembly of believing brothers and sisters for mutual edification." The vacation chapel service is of the latter kind. And Rev. Monsma contends that "no minister has the right to confer God's blessing upon a group of brothers and sisters who, as believers, hold a mutual, free gathering." Why not? Because the minister has the right to carry out the functions of the office which he bears *only* in an *official* gathering held and conducted under official, i.e., consistorial, auspices.

The reason for that — so Rev. Monsma — is that the ministerial office does not reside in the person, and it does not give inherent powers to its bearers. The ministerial office is an appointment from Christ through the Church, and stands under the governance of the Church. The rights and duties of that office are *conferred*, and they may be exercised only by specific authority and under the supervision of the Church which confers them.

The minister functions always under orders. He carries out the duties of the ministry in his own congregation by virtue of a "standing order" from his consistory. He may perform ministerial services in other congregations, too, but only "when the consistories of such churches give . . . the right and mandate to do so." In short, the Rev. Monsma holds that the minister may carry out the functions of his office only upon mandate from a consistory, and only in

the official assembly which is under the supervision of a consistory. This means that "the conferring of God's blessing may take place only on the occasion of an official service of the Word, convened by ecclesiastical officers who alone are authorized to do so, and under whose supervision the service of the Word stands."

One might perhaps suppose that a consistory could authorize its minister to perform the ministerial service in a vacation chapel. But Rev. Monsma would consider this quite as improper. For our consistories are also limited in the exercise of authority. "Our consistories have jurisdiction over the congregations," but "not over free assemblies of believers in certain vacation areas." And our consistories "may not give to their ministers mandates to perform ministerial services in spheres over which they do not have official jurisdiction."

The conclusion, therefore, is that a minister may not pronounce the benediction in a service of worship held in a vacation chapel. He may not do so because the right to perform ministerial services does not inhere in his person but is conferred upon him by the consistory under whose supervision he stands. And his consistory may not authorize him to pronounce the benediction in a vacation chapel, because the consistory has no jurisdiction over a free gathering of believers.

* * *

A judgment like this may be discouraging to those who worship in a chapel service for from three to five months out of the year. It might even lead them to become quite uncertain about the propriety of the whole chapel arrangement. For it would almost seem that there must be something seriously amiss about a worship service in which the blessing of the Lord may be spoken upon the assembled worshippers. Is it quite so? Must we express disapproval of the whole vacation chapel arrangement?

Quite the contrary, I suppose. It is better than to travel many miles to a church and find possibility of attending only one service. It is better than to attend services at a church where the preaching and the spirit of worship leave much to be desired. It is bet-

man to organize a church which could have only a summer or winter church and have no continuing life. For want of something better, the vacation chapel may be considered a praiseworthy arrangement, and one which reflects favorably upon those who are so much concerned to make satisfactory provisions for worship when they are away from home. I wonder if the Lord isn't favorably disposed to those who are both conscientious and careful about their worship of Him, and whether His benediction doesn't rest upon them. And if that be so, I wonder why the benediction may not be pronounced over them while they are engaged in that worship.

* * *

I am much inclined to think it may. For it is not clear that there is anything in the specific statements of scripture or in the general thrust of its teaching that would prohibit it. To the contrary, I believe there are considerations in Scripture and its teaching concerning the communal exercise of worship that would tend to validate the practice.

In support of his contention that the blessing of God may be pronounced only in the official service of worship, the Rev. Monsma cites Numbers 6:22-27:

And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel: ye shall say unto them,

*Jehovah bless thee and keep thee:
Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.
So shall they put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.*

It is quite evident from this passage: . That the priests of Israel were to pronounce a benediction upon the people of Israel in the assembly of worship. . That the specific form of benediction here given must be spoken. This, indeed, is the burden of the injunction. God says: "*On this wise ye shall bless.*" But it would seem hardly warranted to conclude from this that the blessing of God might be pronounced *only* when God's people worshipped their God in an official assembly.

This seems the more so because of what we find concerning the pronouncement of the benediction in the New

Testament. There are the apostolic greetings of Paul and the other apostles:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:7).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14).

These are forms which we now identify as "Salutation" and "Benediction," and which are used in the pronouncement of the blessing in our services of worship.

Paul addressed his letters to congregations, it is true, but not necessarily to congregations gathered in an official worship service. His address was to a body of people, not to a formal gathering. And when he pronounced the blessing of God upon his readers, he did so because whether in official assembly or otherwise they were a communion of saints in Christ to whom God did indeed vouchsafe His blessing. He so addresses "all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," and also "the saints and brethren in Christ that are in Colossae." Peter salutes "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion" in scattered places, and "them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of God and the Savior Jesus Christ."

It may be noted, too, that even when Paul did not address a congregation, but individual Christians like Timothy, Titus, Philemon, he saluted them with the very form that we use in our worship services: "Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." And it would seem reasonable to judge that what may be said to an individual Christian may be said to a group of Christians met for the purpose of worship.

Perhaps this is not wholly conclusive. But it does suggest that the pronouncement of the benediction in a non-official assembly of believers is not clearly or definitely prohibited. Beyond that, however, there are considerations that would seem to suggest that the benediction may quite properly be spoken in a non-official assembly of believers.

* * *

THE crucial consideration, perhaps, is the nature of the assembly. Concerning those who meet in chapel worship, two things are to be noted — the constitution of the assembly (those who make it up), and the purpose of the gathering. As concerns the constitu-

tion of the group in attendance at the vacation chapel services, they are not a non-descript collection of individuals who, like the Athenians, have come together "either to tell or to hear some new thing." They are believers, and their children. They are serious-minded believers, who evidence real concern for God and His Word. They are, furthermore, church-members, who are not indifferent to the instituted church but have a sense of the importance of its offices and ceremonies. They are believers and church-members who for a time are separated from the churches, whose preaching and worship have high significance for their spiritual lives.

These believers and church-members who "have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of God and the Savior Jesus Christ," have come together for the solemn purpose of engaging in worship. Their chapel service is not a PTA meeting, graduation exercises, mission rally, nor even merely a religious conference, or a "meeting" for Bible discourse or study. They have come together with the conscious and deliberate purpose of uniting in the worship of the Lord on the Lord's day. They have come for communion with God and with each other, and to hear His Word, to unite in prayer, to sing His praise, to offer their gifts.

They are confident that "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." And they are mindful that as they assemble for worship there is the divine presence with them, for their Lord said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20)." And perhaps they remember, too, that even as God called His people to worship only Him, He assured them: "In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee" (Exodus 20:24).

And when they look upon God's servant, come from their own churches to minister to them, I should think they would with some longing wait for him to pronounce God's blessing upon them. Should one say to them: "This is not an official assembly. It is not duly convened and supervised by a consistory. Therefore I cannot pronounce the blessing of God upon you." Should one? May one?

Benediction in Florida? — Continued

IT is no satisfactory answer to say that the minister has no authority to do so because he is without a specific mandate from his consistory. If that were so, one might well ask by what right or consideration of propriety he functions at all in the preaching of the Word and prayer at a chapel service in Florida. Perhaps it would be answered that he does not function at the chapel in Florida as a minister but as a Christian believer who by reason of training and experience is able to take a leading part in a "meeting" of Christians for "mutual edification."

That fails, however, to do justice to what might be called the constant character of the minister as minister. It is not quite correct, I believe, to completely separate the office from the person, and to represent office as a sort of eligibility to receive and carry out mandates from a consistory. There is a sense in which the office does reside in the person and is inseparable from the person because Christ has united office and person. When a man is called and appointed by Christ, he is more than a mere functionary who stands waiting upon mandates — "standing orders" or otherwise. He is, by Providential preparation, calling, and appointment by Christ and His Church, made a minister of Christ. That is his character — not *indelibilis*, to be sure, but truly, as long as he continues in the right relationship to Christ and His Church. That is his life-long office, his life-long position. He is always a minister, and as such has authority and mandate from Christ and His Church to function, as the need requires and the occasion demands, as a minister of Christ called to do His work in His Church and His world.

And when a minister leaves his congregation for a few weeks and goes to serve in a vacation chapel in Florida, he does not leave his ministerial office behind him with his consistory. The office goes with him because it is inseparable from his person. He remains — in Florida, and also in the mid-week meeting — a minister of Jesus Christ and His Church, with authority and mandate from Christ and His Church to do what is proper to the Christian ministry. When he preaches the Word of God he does so not as a mere Christian disciple or as a "Bible-lecturer." He does so in the character of what he is — an "ambassador on behalf of Christ,"

who is under constraint, and who cries "for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."

It is in character and position as a minister of Christ that he preaches the gospel in Florida or at Gun Lake. And in the same character and position as a minister of Christ he has authority — perhaps even mandate — to pronounce the benediction upon those whom he knows to be the people of God, the communion of saints, met together on the Lord's day for holy worship. There is this one important condition, however — that the minister in his office stands always under the supervision, care and governance of the Church. His authority and mandate are ultimately interpreted and sanctioned by the church of which he is a minister. The minister is no law unto himself. He is subject, as a minister, to Christ and His Church. And the Church, interpreting and confirming the law of Christ over His ministers, may command that which he neglects and prohibit that which she cannot approve.

As for the minister's service at the vacation chapel, it ought to be basically recognized that he officiates there with authority and mandate appropriate to the minister of Christ. But since as minister of Christ he holds office from the church and under her jurisdiction, there are at least these two possibilities with reference to the question of service at a vacation chapel service:

1. The church may permit her minister to officiate at the chapel service and perform his ministerial duties as the

minister himself may be able to answer in his conscience to Christ and His Church. Meanwhile, he is subject to correction and rebuke if, in the judgment of the church, he does what is not proper.

2. The church may commission her minister, in consultation with interested parties, to perform in a chapel service sponsored by Reformed believers such ministerial functions as are proper to a regular service of the Word. If the Church can commission a minister to perform ministerial services on an occasional field, including such functions as baptizing, administering communion and organizing a church, there is no good reason why she may not commission her minister to serve a group of sojourning believers unable to organize into a church and otherwise not cared for.

* * *

WE are to be fully aware, of course, of the meaning and importance of the institution and offices of the organized church — the provision made by Christ, that in matters relating to His worship all things should be done "decently and in order." God normally and regularly ministers to His people and His world through the agency of the organized church and the offices which He has himself established. But what is given by God as a means for the ministry of His grace may not become an agency which confines and inhibits. No undue ecclesiasticism may stand between God and His people or between God and His World. Nor will it, ultimately, for the Word and grace of God cannot be bound.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

Foxes or Gadflies?

THE utterly unpredictable character of *The Reformed Journal* is what makes it such interesting reading. The day it arrives I can always be sure that my normally low blood pressure will receive a certain stimulation, not always in a bad sense either. But the fact of the matter is that there still remains a dent in my study ceiling made the day I read "A Note to a College Freshman," and had I not been striving for self-control there might have been another dent made when a few days ago I read that little gem of natural history entitled, "Two Little Foxes."

These "little foxes" which are allegedly nibbling at the Reformed foundations need to be studied and examined with greater care. I have a sneaking suspicion that, if they are not just plain hallucinations, they may turn out to be merely a couple of Twentieth Century gad-flies which, like Socrates of old, are simply trying to sting the religious community into some realistic thinking about their faith.

Now then, one fox at a time, please.

"As the College goes, so goes the Church." Gobbledegook! says Daane — I confess he did not make use of that undignified word, but not

theless it would seem to express what he means. Whoever heard of a Church having a school for a heart and a nerve center? Whoever heard of replacing the Means of Grace with a School? Can it be that Dr. Daane has forgotten that these Means of Grace still have fallible human administrators? The Means of Grace and particularly the ministration of the Word do not operate in a vacuum. If we were not convinced that the effectiveness of the ministry was directly proportional to the extent that human fallibility is removed by education and training, certainly the Church would not be spending money and time in the preparation of her ministers. And where is this ministry educated? Is it not true that a good ninety-five percent of the ministers of the Christian Reformed Church have had their pre-seminary training in Calvin College? When such a situation obtains, how can the Church ever go but in the direction of the college?

In effect, Dr. Daane replies, but it is foolish to talk that way when we have the specific promise of our Lord that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, so that if every professor at Calvin should become a rank atheist, the ministry would still be as ably trained to lead the Church as they are now. In order for this blessed promise of our Lord to be applied to the Christian Reformed Church in this way it would seem necessary to assume that *The Church* and *The Christian Reformed Church* were coextensive. No denominational group, no matter how pure or zealous or well-instructed it might be today can claim immunity from future disintegration, on the ground of this promise. To assume such an ecclesiastical egotism would seem to be warranted neither by Scripture nor the history of the Church. The threat to remove the candle is not an idle one and the pathway of history is strewn with dead candles whose sputterings of apostasy began not in the pew or in the pulpit, but in the seminaries and institutions of higher learning which the Church sponsored.

Any discussion as to whether it is more or less anomalous for a Reformed Church as a church to control a college is quite beside the point, for removal from church control would not of itself either intensify or diminish the problem. It is the *status quo* in which we must be interested. The problem *per se* is, can the Christian Reformed Church continue to abide in sound doctrine and good works if Calvin Col-

legit should go the way of all flesh? Whether or not it, i.e., the college, is actually on that way is also beside the point for this discussion. But it remains an incontrovertible fact that with the close relationship that exists between Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church the importance of the college and its professors becomes disproportionately great for the church. Even one professor can, in the course of a few years, lead a very large segment of the future ministry of the church away from our precious Reformed heritage. Nor need this be through purposeful endeavor to set to nought the Word of God or to destroy the Church of Jesus Christ. Many, many Bible scholars of yesterday mistakenly assumed that they could cling with one hand to evangelical Christianity and with the other to "The assured results of higher criticism." Large sections of America's ministry have been trained under such leadership, and it is this ministry that has forsaken the faith and led their churches to apostacy.

No, "As the College goes, so goes the Church" is no "little fox" nibbling at the foundations of the Christian Reformed Church. And it will be only as Calvin College uses a thoroughly integrated Calvinistic Philosophy of Education to give its students — in particular, its ministerial students — a comprehensively Reformed world and life view that the Christian Reformed Church can hope to maintain its position of conservative leadership for true Protestant theology in America. This is no fox, but a gad-fly which in the good providence of God we pray may sting the leadership of that church into an awareness of the responsibility it bears to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Now then, let us look at the other "little fox." Apparently it is this: "Revival of spiritual power will not come by the preaching of the Gospel but only by individual and group Bible study." Such a statement can, of course, be a great wickedness and needs to be examined with great care. One may very well sympathize with Dr. Daane's wariness in regard to it. But we need also to be wary of Dr. Daane's solution of the problem for it would seem that the cure actually proves to be worse than the disease, particularly when that disease has been properly diagnosed.

It would seem that Dr. Daane wants to set up an antithesis between indi-

vidual and group Bible study on the one hand and the official proclamation of the Word by an ordained minister on the other. Only in the latter case do we have the Means of Grace. Faith, he claims, "is worked in man's heart through the proclamation of the Church," and he seemingly extends his claim to say that no other kind of Bible study or teaching is or can be used by the Holy Spirit to work the miracle of Faith. The question then becomes, is it the Word that is the Means of Grace or only the official proclamation of the Word by the Church that is the Means of Grace? Does Paul, for example, when he declares the Gospel to be "the power of God unto salvation," mean that it is such only when proclaimed officially by the Church? Or when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews states that the Word of God is "living, active and sharper than any two-edged sword," does he mean that it is only that when it is officially proclaimed by the Church? When Paul states that "all scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness," does he mean that it is thus profitable only when officially proclaimed by the Church? When he reminds Timothy of the fact that from a babe he had known the scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation, does he mean that they are so only when officially proclaimed by the Church? Does not Lord's Day 12 teach that in Christ all God's people have become prophets? And does not the fact of Pentecost bear Divine testimony to the fact that the confession of Christ made by every believer may be as effectual as a Means of Grace as the official proclamation by the church? There must be a very real sense in which the outpouring of the Holy Spirit becomes the seal of Divine blessing upon the witness of every believer. Witnessing is not the task of the organized church only but of the whole body of Christ. True, there is an official witness of the organized church, but to say that it alone is used by the Holy Spirit to the salvation of souls or the edification of the saints is to exalt the ministry to a place of unparalleled power which is strangely reminiscent of Rome. It is no more correct to say that a revival of spiritual power can come only through the official proclamation by the church, than it is to say that it can come only through individual and group Bible study.

But above and beyond this arises the

question of why this attitude? Why this second fox? The history of the church has here also a significant lesson for us. All too frequently divisive sects and heretical movements have begun in the church simply because the church had fallen down in its duty. Officially it was not proclaiming the whole counsel of God the way it should have. A certain lack of emphasis by the church sooner or later brings about a reform movement. Sometimes that reform can be carried on conservatively within the proper channels of the church. At other times it may become radical and necessitate the formation of a new ecclesiastical body. And it is not infrequent that the more radical reforms result in an emphasis more lop-sided than the one that the reform was designed to correct.

Now the notion that revival of spiritual power cannot come to a church except through private and group study is an emphasis which has arisen from time to time in various forms. And all too frequently it has flouted the right of private interpretation in the very face of the ordained ministry and despised the sacred office which God has established in the church. But if this condition exists in the Christian Reformed Church to the extent which Dr. Daane leads one to believe, then it becomes important to seek to establish the cause of such an attitude and to take whatever steps may be necessary to correct the situation. When the people seem to lack confidence in the clergy, and certainly the alleged condition indicates this lack of confidence, then it is not too much to expect the clergy to examine its own position, its own ministry, to see if it has indeed been declaring the whole counsel of God faithfully, to see if it has been performing its official task of proclaiming the Word of God with all fidelity, to see if that preaching has relevance to the man of the twentieth century, to his own problems, his own sins, his own specific need.

Now if we grant what amounts to the major premise, that the church is in need of spiritual awakening — and Dr. Daane does not seem to take issue with that assumption — then it would seem all too plain that somewhere there is something amiss with the official proclamation of God's Word. Somehow it is not bearing that fruit which we might reasonably expect of it in the conversion of sinners and the edification of the saints. Somehow it is evident that the people seem to have an almost

intuitive sense of lack, of a need which is not being met and which they hope will be met by their individual and group study. And we may not be so hasty as to say that it will not work, that it will not serve to awaken the Christian consciousness of the church.

We are constrained to wonder, for example, if as a matter of fact the Means of Grace has not been thought to be the preaching of the Catechism rather than the preaching of the Word. These need not be antithetical, but they may be. Dr. Daane in *The Banner* of December 23, 1949, p. 1511, states, "Our ministry by and large approves of Catechism preaching, yet one wonders if there is not a perceptible degree of slippage even among them. Some preach on a text suggested by the Catechism; some preach the Catechism, but, as a concession to the dislikes of the audience, do not read the Catechism; and some so preach the Catechism that after the first five minutes the audience is no longer aware that it is a Catechism sermon." Dr. Daane himself seems to suggest the antithesis between catechism and Scripture in the matter of preaching. Now that the church must be adequately instructed in the doctrines of Scripture and that this instruction may most profitably be given under the outline of a catechism or confession of faith is a proposition to which all must agree. But when it comes to the point where preaching the Catechism means to exegete and homilize the words of Ursinus, or to discourse at length on some subject of the Catechism with quotations from the Scripture used only as proof-texts, then such preaching ceases to be the solemn proclamation of the Word of God which is envisaged in Christ's commands to feed the sheep and make disciples of all nations. We may "prove" anything by the use of proof-texts, which has been all too ably demonstrated by Mary Baker Eddy. Not until our preaching is founded on an exhaustive analysis and synthesis of Scripture are we able to say that we are proclaiming the Word of God. But if it has only been Dr. Daane's version of "Catechism Preaching" that has been going on in the Christian Reformed Church, then it may well be that revival of scriptural power will not, cannot, come by means of it, and may come only by means of individual or group Bible study. One may sincerely wonder whether the desire for private and group Bible study has not

been fostered by a healthy curiosity to see whether what the Catechism and its preachers have said is also by some remote possibility contained in the Word of God.

Dr. Daane goes on to say, in *The Banner*, "Too many people much prefer a dramatic, colorful sermon on David and Goliath to a sermon on a subject from the catechism. — And is it not true that in the day of deep need, in the hour of death our souls will find strength and solace not in the sensational dramatics of a sermon on Goliath but in the truths contained in the Catechism?" It would seem that we could be reasonably sure that David's only comfort in life and in death was that he with body and soul belonged unto a faithful Saviour. And few stories of the Word of God so forcefully and dramatically point up the blessed truth which the Catechism affirms than the story of David's encounter with Goliath, an encounter fraught with the issues of life and death. David's confidence and courage took their rise in the simple conviction that he belonged to the God of the armies of Israel whom Goliath had defied. And we may be very certain that if God grants us consciousness in the hour of death, the beauty of these words from the Catechism will be intensified an hundred fold by the knowledge that David confidently faced death with that same thought in his heart, "I am God's and He is mine." Why, may we ask, are these dramatic situations recorded in God's Word if not for the purpose of impressing more forcibly upon our minds the truths which they so gloriously illustrate? Why not then use them in preaching for that same purpose? It is too much to expect the truth to live. It is the Word of God which is active and living, not the word of the Catechism. Dr. Daane, it would seem, suffering from an over-exalted view of the ministry and an attenuated view of the Word of God. And if that is the case, then our second fox is but another gad-fly. We need to be careful lest we confuse the symptoms with the disease. There is no need for bounties to be paid for the capture of foxes, but there is need for prayer that the sting of the gad-flies might drive the leadership of the church to its collective knees before God in search of a true revival of spiritual power.

(Rev.) Earl E. Zetterholm,
Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Seattle, Washington.